

883 raised against such raiders. It is considered a disgrace to
 836 be discovered as an accomplice in raids on the girls' sleeping quarters.

ON ATTAINING MATURITY

881 The attainment of maturity among girls is marked by
 178 the first onset of menstruation. In the past this was kept very secret until several periods had been experienced, and even now its first occurrence is kept secret. Formerly, early preparations were made for it by instructing the girls about the physical changes involved.

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 [582] The information regarding this important physiological happening used to be given by the old woman in whose hut the girls slept. At present the information is obtained largely from experienced women with whom the girls associate. In the past there was no initiation ceremony to celebrate the event, and today the position remains the same. Although the betrothal of a girl could take place as early as ten, the social attitude was and still is that girls should not be handed over to their husbands before attaining maturity. Even when the mutual handing over took place before this age, the girl was obliged to live in the home of some older woman until the advent of menstruation. It is still believed that premature marriage results in great weakness to the girl.

882 *The social position of a girl on reaching maturity.* The
 [732] social position of the newly-mature girl is vague and uncertain. Any abnormality of mind, character or body, is a source of anxiety to her family. Moreover, as most
 [582] girls marry between sixteen and eighteen, there is a tendency for ill-wishers to over-state the ages of girls above that limit, because the attitude of society towards them is similar to that adopted towards overdue goods. Those who fail to marry at an early age thus become
 589 subjects of scorn. So strong is the pressure exerted by
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